

REMARKS

In view of the above amendments and following remarks, reconsideration and further examination are requested.

The specification and abstract have been reviewed and revised to make editorial changes thereto and generally improve the form thereof, and a substitute specification and abstract are provided. No new matter has been added by the substitute specification and abstract.

Claims 1-5 have been cancelled and claims 6-25 have been added. Claims 6-25 have been drafted taking into account the 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, issues raised by the Examiner, are believed to be free of these issues, and are otherwise believed to be in compliance with 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

The instant invention pertains to an automatic paper feed apparatus for papers. Such an automatic paper feed apparatus is generally known in the art, but suffers from drawbacks as expressed on pages 1-2 of the original specification. Applicants have addressed and resolved these drawbacks by providing a unique automatic paper feed apparatus.

Specifically, with reference to Fig. 5, for example, the inventive automatic paper feed apparatus comprises a feed roller 6 for automatically feeding papers 2 when these papers are contained in a cassette 5 in a stack state, and a holding member 16 which is constructed and arranged to be positioned on an uppermost one of the papers such that when the feed roller automatically feeds the uppermost one of the papers a friction force exists between the holding member and the uppermost one of the papers. That component of the friction force resulting from the holding member 16 is generated solely from a weight of the holding member and a coefficient of friction of a surface of the holding member that contacts the uppermost one of the papers, and the friction force is weaker than a friction force existing between the feed roller 6 and the uppermost one of the papers.

Because the holding member 16 is such that its own weight is responsible for a friction force being generated between the holding member and the uppermost one of the papers (with this friction force being weaker than a friction force existing between the feed roller 6 and the uppermost one of the papers), as the uppermost one of the papers is being feed by the feed roller the holding member will come into contact with the paper immediately adjacent to the uppermost one of the papers such that the holding member simultaneously contacts the uppermost one of the papers and the adjacent

paper, whereby it is possible to individually convey the papers stably and prevent the papers from being discharged in an overlapped state. New claim 6 is believed to be representative of Applicants' inventive automatic paper feed apparatus.

Claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Sasaki et al., and claims 2-5 were indicated to contain allowable subject matter. The indication of allowable subject matter is greatly appreciated; however, claims 2-5 have not been rewritten in independent form, but rather claim 1 has been amended (rewritten as new claim 6) so as to further bring out inventive features of the invention. New claim 6 is believed to be allowable over Sasaki et al., since the automatic paper feed apparatus as recited in claim 6 is not taught or suggested by Sasaki et al.

In this regard, while push plate or holding member 11h of Sasaki et al. does come into contact with an uppermost one of recording sheets 12 such that a friction force is generated between the push plate and the uppermost one of the sheets 12, this friction force is generated not by a weight of the push plate, but is rather generated by a spring property of the push plate due to the bend at bend line 30. Accordingly, because the push plate 11h of Sasaki et al. does not generate a friction force solely from a weight of the push plate and coefficient of friction of a surface thereof (as required by claim 6), claim 6 is not anticipated by Sasaki et al. Thus, claims 6-25 are allowable over Sasaki et al.

Certain of the dependent claims are believed to be patentable in their own right. In this regard, in addition to claims 7-10 (which basically correspond to allowable claims 2-5), claim 13 is believed to be allowable because this claim recites that the holding member is a urethane rubber flexible sheet or a silicon flexible sheet. The push plate of Sasaki et al. is disclosed to be neither of silicon nor urethane, whereby claim 13 is patentable in its own right.

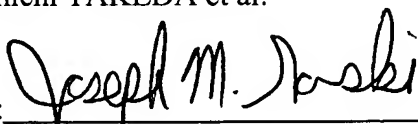
Claim 22 is also believed to be patentable in its own right because this claim recites that the holding member is flaccid. The push plate 11h of Sasaki et al. is not flaccid, and accordingly, claim 22 is patentable in its own right.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance and an early Notice of Allowance is earnestly solicited.

If after reviewing this Amendment, the Examiner believes that any issues remain which must be resolved before the application can be passed to issue, the Examiner is invited to contact the Applicants' undersigned representative by telephone to resolve such issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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